

## A General Question about Sentence Classification in Chinese

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**Abstract:** The scientific views of Russian, Chinese and American scientists on the issue of dividing general interrogative sentences into subtypes in Chinese studies were critically analyzed, and a classification of general interrogative sentences corresponding to Chinese language phenomena was given both theoretically and practically. In addition, it was recommended to divide interrogative sentences in Chinese into three types.

**Keywords:** Chinese, interrogative sentences, general interrogative sentences, interrogative loading, interrogative words, fragmented interrogative sentences, interrogative intonation.

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### INTRODUCTION

Uzbek Chinese studies is rapidly developing after the independence of our Republic. We can see this from the fact that a number of Chinese language textbooks and manuals are being published in Uzbek. However, due to the lack of clarity in some theoretical issues of Chinese grammar, it is also noticeable that our authors are having difficulties in giving the correct description of linguistic phenomena. This applies not only to Uzbek Chinese studies, but is one of the problems in Chinese studies in general.

In order to correct this situation, although partially, we would like to give a comprehensive opinion by studying the diversity of the Chinese language in dividing general sentences into subtypes from a scientific and theoretical point of view.

The well-known Chinese scientist, V. I. Gorelov, in his book "Grammar of the Chinese language" distinguishes three types of interrogative sentences: general interrogative sentences, special interrogative sentences and alternative interrogative sentences.

### MAIN PART

When we talk about general interrogative sentences, we usually mean interrogative sentences made with the interrogative case 吗. Or asking a question through interrogative intonation is also included in this line. However, according to V. I. Gorelov, among general interrogative sentences, there is another subtype, which is "dismembered question"<sup>1</sup>, that is, fragmented interrogative sentences. The term fragmented interrogative sentence is not only the exact translation of the Russian term used by V.I. Gorelov, but also corresponds to the essence of this type of interrogative sentences.

Fragmented interrogative sentences consist of two parts. The first part indicates the main content (whether or not it is participative), and the second part indicates the question. The question is in such words are expressed 是不是 "yes, no", 好不好 "good, bad", 对不对 "correct, incorrect", 行不行 "it will, it won't". They should be translated into Uzbek as follows: *isn't it?*, *is it good?*, *isn't it right?*, *will it be?*

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<sup>1</sup> V.I.Gorelov. Grammar of the Chinese language. M. Enlightenment. 1974. -54p.

We will give examples:

明天咱们到他那里去，好不好？*We're going to his home tomorrow, is it good?*

别嚷，行不行？*Don't shout, will it be?*

我还没有问你，你就先要问我啦，是不是？*You're asking me a question before I ask you, aren't you?*

In addition, one of the important means of expressing fragmented interrogative sentences is interrogative intonation.

When V.M. Solntsev divides interrogative sentences into types, unlike V.I. Gorelov, he puts special interrogative sentences in the first place, sees general interrogative sentences in the second place, and places alternative interrogative sentences in the third place<sup>2</sup>. According to the scientist, general interrogative sentences are those that require a yes or no answer.

Speaking about the means of expression of the second type of sentences, that is, general interrogative sentences, V.I. Solntsev enumerates the preposition 吗, 好不好 and 是不是 introductory phrases (introductory expressions), interrogative intonation as a separate device, and repetition of the verb in participative and participial forms. So, V.M. Solntsev divides sentences made with the preposition 吗 as a subtype of general interrogative sentences. In addition, 好不好, 是不是 is considered to be involved in the formation of interrogative sentences with introductory phrases and the repetition of participle and participle forms of the verb. So, V. M. Solntsev distinguishes a subtype of instrumental interrogative sentences among general interrogative sentences.

The scientist notes that the predicate 吗 cannot participate in the construction of interrogative sentences. As an example, he gives the following sentence:

*I don't know if he will go?* The sentence cannot be translated as 我不知道他去吗?

He considers it necessary to give it in the variants 我不知道他去不去? or 我不知道他是不是去?. The main reason is that not only the participle, but also any part of the sentence may remain under question in the predicate sentence 吗.

According to V. M. Solntsev, 是不是 can stand in front of any part of a participle or non-participle sentence (except for the complement, only if it is not placed in front of the sentence) and participates in asking a question to it<sup>3</sup>.

For example:

他昨天是不是买了书？*did he buy a book yesterday?*

他是不是昨天买了书？*did he buy the book yesterday?*

是不是他昨天买了书？*yesterday did he buy the book?*

When the introductory phrase 是不是 is translated into Uzbek, as we can see, it affects the order of the words in the sentence, that is, the participle is placed after the question word.

Note that if we focus the question on the complement (that is, not *what was bought?* but whether *the book was bought?*), then the order of the sentence changes completely and the complement becomes the part of the clause expressed by the noun.

For example: 你昨天买的是不是书？*is that a book you bought yesterday?* can also be at the end of the sentence, *isn't it? Really?* An interrogative sentence is made similar to sentences. For

<sup>2</sup> V.M. Solntsev. Essays on Modern Chinese. M. IMO Publishing House. 1957. 174 p.

<sup>3</sup> V.M. Solntsev. Essays on Modern Chinese. M. IMO Publishing House. 1957. 178 p

example: 你昨天买了书是不是? *you bought a book yesterday, didn't you?*

好不好 is placed only at the end of the sentence and is *enough?*, *ok?* is translated as for example: 我明天去好不好? *I'm leaving tomorrow, am I?* According to V.M. Solntsev, general interrogative sentences can also be made through intonation, for example: 你要等太阳? *Do you want to wait for the sun to rise?*

As we can see, V.M. Solntsev interprets interrogative sentences with a check mark as instrumental interrogative sentences and explains 是不是 as introductory phrases. Unlike V. I. Gorelov, he also adds interrogative sentences to these sentences, which are made by repeating the participle and participle forms of the verb.

A.F. Kotova proposed a different classification of interrogative sentences. He divided the questions into simple and alternative ones. Alternative interrogative sentences are divided into definite alternative and indefinite alternative interrogative sentences<sup>4</sup>. V.I. Gorelov and V.M. Solntsev showed the general interrogative sentences (including marked interrogative sentences), the scientist studied them within simple interrogative sentences and did not distinguish them as a separate type. Interrogative sentences made by repeating the participle and non-participle forms of the verb are called definite alternative interrogative sentences.

E.I. Shutova devoted only 7 pages to interrogative sentences in her 400-pages book on the syntax of the Chinese language. Without giving the classification of interrogative sentences in the usual way, it approaches in terms of grammatical construction and distinguishes four types of means expressing the meaning of interrogative: 1) interrogative intonation; 2) interrogation load吗; 3) constructions of different sections with alternative meaning; 4) a question to different parts of the sentence through interrogative pronouns<sup>5</sup>.

In Liu Yuehua's practical grammar<sup>6</sup>, interrogative sentences are divided into four types: 是非问句 sentences that require a yes or no answer - *general interrogative sentences*, 特指问句 *special interrogative sentences*, 正反问句 *interrogative sentences with participle and non-participle form*, 选择问句 *alternative interrogative sentences*.

General interrogative sentences, Liu Yue hua - are divided into the following subtypes:

1. 吗 interrogative sentences with predicate, for example: 这个月三十一天吗? *Does this month have thirty-one days?*;
2. 好吗, 行吗, 对吗, 可以吗 and other interrogative sentences, 我们从东门进去, 可以吗? *We will enter through the eastern gate, shall we?*;
3. interrogative sentences formed by interrogative intonation, 今天晚上你不去图书馆了? *Didn't you go to the library this evening?*;
4. To interrogative sentences with the predicate 吧, 这是你女儿吧? *This is your daughter?*

Huang Bojung's textbook Modern Chinese, which has been reprinted three times, also expresses a similar view to Liu Yuehua's approach. Four types of interrogative sentences are distinguished, only general interrogative sentences are not divided into any subtypes<sup>7</sup>. As we can see, not all Chinese scholars have divided interrogative sentences into specific and detailed types.

American scholars Charlie Lee and Sandra Thomson's book also mentions four grammatical

<sup>4</sup> A.F. Kotova. Interrogative sentences in modern Chinese. M. 1963. 10 p.

<sup>5</sup> Е.И.Шутова. Синтаксис современного китайского языка. М. «НАУКА». 1991 г. 360с

<sup>6</sup> 刘月华. 使用现代汉语语法. 商务印书馆. 北京 2003 年, 785 页.

<sup>7</sup> 黄伯荣. 现代汉语. 下册. 高等教育出版社. 北京 2004 年 112 p.

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types of interrogative sentences and recognizes the presence of interrogative intonation<sup>8</sup>.

The first type of interrogative sentences includes *question-word questions*, for example: *shei qu?* (The book by American scholars is 691 pages long, with Chinese examples given in Latin transcription - pinyin zimu) *who goes?*

The second type is a *disjunctive question*<sup>9</sup> - a divided question, that is, it consists of two simple sentences with a *haishi* morpheme in between. Example: *ni qu haishi ta lai?* *Are you going or is he coming?*

The third type of interrogative sentence, *tag question* is called an added interrogative sentence, that is, "A-no-A" compounds are added to the tag question, for example: *dui bu dui, hao bu hao, xing bu xing, shi bu shi.*

And the last fourth type is a *particle question* - an interrogative sentence with a predicate, which is made by adding the predicate *ma* to the end of the sentence. For example: *ni hao ma?* *how are you*

The book gives a detailed description of each type with a number of examples and shows how to translate it into English. We were only interested in the section that shows the difference between *tag question* and *particle question*. The reason is that V. I. Gorelov studied them in one type of interrogative sentences - general interrogative sentences.

By providing information about *tag question*, attention is drawn to the fact that they are used only for confirmation, and not to obtain specific information, unlike the *question-word*. In the other two, it is recommended to see the difference between interrogative sentences in the form "A- no-A" and *particle question* in the context of conversation. For example, when greeting someone:

A: *ni haoxiang shoule yidian. You seem to have lost a little weight.*

B: *shi ma? Ni kan wo shoule ma? Wo ziji dao bu jue. Really? Look, I lost weight? I don't feel like it.*

One of the Uzbek linguists A. Hojiev divides interrogative sentences in Uzbek into pure interrogative sentences and rhetorical interrogative sentences<sup>10</sup>. The first are defined as interrogative sentences that require an answer, and the second as non-answerable interrogative sentences. There is also such an approach in Chinese studies, for example, Liu Yue hua, in Chinese 疑问句 and 反问句 distinguish.

Shavkat Rahmatullaev divides interrogative sentences in Uzbek language into two types: interrogative sentences made by interrogative pronouns and interrogative sentences made by interrogative predicates and interrogative sentences made by using both at the same time<sup>11</sup>. Interrogative Pronouns demonstrates with examples how to make interrogative sentences using seven different interrogative pronouns: *how, what, why, who, when, where, where*. Interrogative clauses distinguish four types of sentences.

The addition of the preposition *-mi* determines the subtypes of the interrogative sentences that are replaced by the preposition *-mi* depending on which word group they are attached to, for example, the preposition *-mi* separates the types that are attached to verbs, nouns, adjectives, and pronouns.

Sentences with the suffix *-chi* usually refer to word groups other than verbs. *Did you like this*

<sup>8</sup> Ch. N.Li, S.A.Thompson. Mandarin Chinese. A Functional Reference Grammar. University of Colifornia Press.1989. 522 p

<sup>9</sup> R.R.K.Hartman and F.C.Stork. 黄长著 Dictionary of language and linguistics. 语言与语言学词典. 上海辞书出版社. 1984年. 105 бет.

<sup>10</sup> A.Хожиев. Лингвистик терминларнинг изоҳли луғати. Т., "Ўқитувчи" 1985 й. 78 бет

<sup>11</sup> Sh. Rahmatullaev. Hozirgi adabiy o'zbek tili. Т., "Universitet" 2006 y. 388 bet

*song? Yes, what about you?*

➤ *a download is added, my brother is good?*

Do you know that the download has been added, *so that it has been blocked?*<sup>12</sup>

Of course, the Chinese language differs sharply from the Uzbek language both typologically and genetically. One of the biggest typological features of the Chinese language is that sentence order affects not only the grammatical meaning, but also the semantics of lexical units. Therefore, it is important to distinguish the types and subtypes of interrogative sentences.

Let's summarize the above information and give conclusions that correspond to the Chinese language. It is appropriate to distinguish three types of pure interrogative sentences in Chinese: general interrogative sentences, special interrogative sentences, alternative interrogative sentences (they are divided into definite alternative interrogative sentences and indefinite alternative interrogative sentences).

We have deliberately not included rhetorical interrogatives among the above, because a rhetorical question can arise with all of the three types of pure interrogatives listed. Therefore, it is correct to study rhetorical questions separately. In addition, the counter question, that is, answering the question with a question, was not included in the three types.

## CONCLUSION

Since we are directly investigating general interrogative sentences, we will only attempt to identify subtypes of general interrogative sentences. So, general interrogative sentences can be divided into the following subtypes:

1. 吗 to predicate interrogative sentences, for example: 他是东北人吗? *Is he from Dungebei?*;
2. To interrogative sentences, i.e. to interrogative sentences formed with the help of simple demonstrative sentences 好吗, 行吗, 对吗, 可以吗 and others, for example: 你是日本人, 对吗? *You are a Yanonian, right?*;
3. To interrogative sentences formed by interrogative intonation, for example: 小张没来? *Xiao Zhang didn't come?*;
4. To interrogative sentences with predicate 吧, 小张不来了吧? *Xiao Zhang won't come- eh?*

The division of Chinese general interrogative sentences into the four smaller types shown above best reflects the characteristics of the language. In addition, our proposed division of Chinese interrogative sentences into three types is practical and allows for an objective evaluation of language phenomena.

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<sup>12</sup> Sh. Rahmatullaev. Hozirgi adabiy o'zbek tili. T., "Universitet" 2006 y. 389 bet  
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